

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 294

September 27, 1999, 6:15 p.m.
Page S-11491 Temp. Record

MORE SPENDING, MORE NATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION/Rejection

SUBJECT: A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate in favor of increasing spending on various Federal education programs and proposals . . . S. Res. 187. Rejection.

ACTION: RESOLUTION REJECTED, 41-52

SYNOPSIS: As introduced and rejected, S. Res. 187, will express the sense of the Senate in favor of increasing Federal spending on various Federal education programs and proposals. Specific higher spending proposals that will be endorsed include the following: \$1.4 billion for a second year of funding for an unauthorized program to pay public school districts to hire more teachers in order to reduce the average number of students per class; \$600,000 to triple funding for a broad-based education program that the Clinton/Gore Administration has, by regulatory fiat, turned into an afterschool program; and a "minimum of \$3.7 billion" in Federal funds to modernize schools. The amendment would also express the sense of the Senate that the Senate should pay for that extra education funding by reducing other spending in order to stay within the discretionary spending caps and to avoid using the Social Security surpluses. Finally, the amendment would find that the Appropriations Committee was considering a 17-percent cut in education spending for this year's appropriations bill (when the Senate began consideration of this resolution, the Appropriations Committee was finishing marking up the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Bill, which proposed a large increase in education spending, in accordance with the Budget Resolution).

NOTE: This resolution, which was offered by the Minority Leader, was debated concurrently with a resolution on the same topic that was offered by the Majority Leader (see vote No. 296).

Those favoring

(See other side)

YEAS (41)		NAYS (52)		NOT VOTING (7)	
Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (41 or 98%)	Republicans (51 or 100%)	Democrats (1 or 2%)	Republicans (4)	Democrats (3)
Akaka	Johnson	Abraham	Hutchison	Byrd	Bunning ⁻²
Baucus	Kennedy	Allard	Inhofe		Kohl ⁻²
Bayh	Kerrey	Ashcroft	Jeffords		Chafee ⁻²
Biden	Kerry	Bennett	Kyl		Leahy ^{-2AY}
Bingaman	Landrieu	Bond	Lott		Torricelli ⁻²
Boxer	Lautenberg	Brownback	Lugar		
Breaux	Levin	Burns	Mack		
Bryan	Lieberman	Campbell	McConnell		
Cleland	Lincoln	Cochran	Murkowski		
Conrad	Mikulski	Collins	Nickles		
Daschle	Moynihan	Coverdell	Roberts		
Dodd	Murray	Craig	Roth		
Dorgan	Reed	Crapo	Santorum		
Durbin	Reid	DeWine	Sessions		
Edwards	Robb	Domenici	Shelby		
Feingold	Rockefeller	Enzi	Smith, Bob (I)		
Feinstein	Sarbanes	Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon		
Graham	Schumer	Frist	Snowe		
Harkin	Wellstone	Gorton	Specter		
Hollings	Wyden	Gramm	Stevens		
Inouye		Grams	Thomas		
		Grassley	Thompson		
		Gregg	Thurmond		
		Hatch	Voinovich		
		Helms	Warner		
		Hutchinson			

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:

AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

Labor-Health and Human Services-Education subcommittee indicated that Republicans intended to take a whopping 17 percent out of education programs this year. We oppose any reduction. We think that education funding should be the first priority, not the last, and that we ought to pay for an increase within the budget. Though our Republican colleagues accuse us of wanting to have the Federal Government take over local education, our resolution clearly shows that we understand that education should remain primarily a local responsibility. The Federal Government has traditionally acted by assisting in targeted areas, such as disabilities education, which were not being taken care of locally. This resolution follows in that appropriate tradition by offering help in specific areas, such as hiring teachers, building and fixing schools, and starting afterschool programs. Our colleagues who do not think that these areas are priorities for local schools ought to go home and talk to a few school boards. These are the areas of greatest need, and these are the areas in which Democrats want the Federal Government to provide help. We strongly support the priorities outlined in this resolution and are therefore pleased to vote in favor of passage.

Those opposing passage contended:

Since we Republicans have been in control in Congress, we have been slowly but surely reforming the Federal Government's approach to public education. Democrats have resisted our efforts, arguing instead for more money to increase Federal bureaucratic control over the Nation's public schools. Their approach is to ignore all of the old Federal education programs that are failing and that are burdening local school systems and instead to add new Federal programs, each of which is lovingly named after the Democratic Senators who concocted them (and who like to make lots of campaign commercials bragging about how those new programs, if enacted, will supposedly save local schools). The Republican approach to education is far different. Republicans believe in increasing funding for current Federal commitments before assuming new responsibilities, reducing costly Federal mandates and paperwork requirements on States and local schools, giving more authority to local schools and parents over how their children are taught, and radically reforming current Federal education programs so that success will be based not on whether the money was spent as demanded by the Federal Government but on whether the results sought were actually achieved.

The two resolutions before us (see vote No. 293 for the vote on the Republican resolution) perfectly illustrate the two parties' differing approaches to education. The Democratic resolution starts by falsely suggesting that the Senate Appropriations Committee intends to propose cutting education spending by 17 percent this year. Our Democratic colleagues participated in the markup of the appropriations bill for education today and are well aware that the bill contains a large increase for education programs. Before the markup, we suppose they could have made the prediction that Republicans would not follow the Budget Resolution plan for increasing education spending, but now they have no excuse for claiming there will be large cuts. We imagine that this increase must be perplexing for Democrats. They always define the value of a program not by how well it works but by how much of the taxpayers' money they spend on it, so the markup inexplicably tells them that Republicans must be more committed to education than they are. Their solution, as it always is when they are confronted by stubborn facts, is to ignore reality. They have refused to amend their resolution to reflect that the Appropriations Committee has proposed an increase, not a decrease, in education funding.

Interestingly, and commendably, their resolution also suggests cutting other spending to pay for all of their new spending ideas. Of course, this resolution is just to express the sense of the Senate. Our Democrat colleagues can advise themselves to restrain spending, but they very seldom follow their own advice. We have considered all but one of the spending bills for this year, and on most of those bills we have had to fight back attempts by Democrats to increase spending. Similarly, we are glad that this resolution mentions that we ought to provide more money for disabilities education. We Republicans have been fighting, successfully, to increase spending on that purpose. Again, Democrats would be more believable if they joined in some of our efforts to spend money on disabilities education instead of always voting instead to create new Federal programs. Democrats have countered that this year they voted to give the full 40-percent Federal commitment for disabilities education. However, they only did so in an effort to deny tax relief by that same amount. Frankly, Democrats would vote to spend money on virtually anything as long as they could tax the American people more. That Democrat vote did not demonstrate the Democrats' support for disabilities education--it demonstrated their opposition to tax relief.

The rest of their resolution proposes spending on new programs, which is anything but commendable (but certainly is not surprising for Democrats). The Federal Government has nearly 800 education programs. It gives local public schools only 4 percent of their funding (when the extra couple of percent for nutrition programs is not counted), yet it imposes more than half of all of public schools' administrative paperwork costs. How do Democrats propose to solve this problem? Do they wonder why Federal programs cause such problems? No, they conclude that the problem is that they need to create a slew of brand new programs to get the Government involved in even more areas. For instance, they want the Federal Government to hire teachers to reduce average class sizes, even though class sizes have declined steadily over the last several decades at the same time as student performance has declined. A handful of studies show that small benefits can come from having lower teacher/student ratios, but most studies have found little or no correlation. Other gimmick solutions that Democrats currently champion are to have the Federal Government start building and repairing schools and to pump money into yet another afterschool program.

This Democratic resolution on education is based on the same two failed, dead premises that guide Democratic thinking on every issue--the solution to every problem is more Federal spending and more Federal control. We emphatically reject both premises and, of course, oppose this resolution.